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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the thoughts of a retired teacher about experiences in education--both as student and as teacher. Following descriptions and reactions, it is concluded that the problems of education are most manifest in the public funding of education--especially federal funding--since the institution and continuation of programs is not based on true program merits, but on the availability of money to support them. Thus, programs are started, stopped, and supplanted to the detriment of continuity and integrity. Similarly, it is concluded that a restoration of the free market system is needed in education to keep schools concentrating on their true purpose and to eliminate those that do not. With the guaranteed financial support of the state, schools are no longer held accountable for student acquisition of basic competencies; thus all schools simply carry on, whether or not there is a sense of mission. But accountability and a sense of mission will still not be attained if administrators are not also teachers. It is suggested that the trend to educate administrators separetly from teachers and not give them teaching experience can only accelerate the decline of education. Teachers ought to aim at taking control of the school--to claim responsibility in all areas now denied them. (DCS)

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One Teacher's Opinion

Thomas J. Donovan

Through five generations, whether on this continent, or in the British Isles, the occupation most frequent in the families from whom I issue has been teaching school. Starting off the count with two out of the eight great-grandparents, I believe our teachers may total two hundred; more, if we include those who prepared to teach, but didn't. I suspect nothing unusual in this. Many families would find something like it to be the case among their own members, if they examined themselves; and just on this account, teaching can never be a profession having the absolute mystery of Law or Medicine. Numbers are certainly magnified because teaching has been a career possibility for women as well as men over a long period of time, at least since St. Catherine of Alexandria. Perhaps there are studies of such matters. I do not know. But when I myself came finally to retire from the classroom, I began to wonder if anything learned about schooling persisted in family lore, or if reflection on my own experience might be of permanent value, and a guide to the future. Especially have I wondered whether my own time as a student in high school had any permanent effect on me, what I myself may have learned as a teacher in high school, and what judgments I might be prepared to make upon what is done in schools. I offer a memoir and an advisory.

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Both of my parents had gone to private schools, and when my time for high school came, I was sent across the river from home to a prep school under the direction of the Holy Cross Fathers, on the campus of the University of Portland. That school has now been long defunct, but they tell me the Fathers are still extant on the premises. The school took boarders, although I was a day dog, as were most of the other students. Coming from another state as I did, I felt pretty much an outsider when I was a freshman, especially since the emphasis laid upon football in the days of my youth was oppressive. Those with small athletic ability, who found a little swimming adequate for their needs, were bound to feel resentment, and to think themselves exploited for the benefit of the football team. Players were recruited from remote and barbarous places like Utah and Montana, and for the most part it was they who made up the contingent of the boarders. The rest of us were supposed to go to the games and yell. Only many years later, at the University of Southern California, did I come to understand the intellectual character of all the movement on the field, and the skill that went into the play. And it was only then, I believe, that I began to see why those ballplayers had such a close relationship with their coaches.

Eventually the advantages of going to school in Portland became manifest. We could go downtown after school and meet the girls from St. Mary's in the booths at Meier and Frank's record department. In those days, you got to play the records before you bought them. I also came to enjoy school itself, despite certain ancient rigidities. For example, we were always seated in alphabetical order, so that over the years the people I knew best were Joe Cochran and Dom Callicrate, on my left, and Tom Drennan and Gus Ebeling, on my right. Don Jeesop and Hal Lyster sat directly behind me, so I knew them, too.

Lately, in retrospective introspection, I have begun to see what the old school wrought in me, and to appreciate the singularity of its best features. We had regular access to a library of a quality not often available to high school students. We could spend undisturbed hours in contempla-

tion of Dore's illustrations for the *Divine Comedy* in its vast leather tomes. We could also make some surprising discoveries in the Dictionary of Egyptian hieroglyphics. The school was staffed with some very good men, and the teacher-student ratio was highly favorable. Teachers who were not members of the Holy Cross community had equal dedication to the education of the young; obviously they were not motivated by hope of worldly gain. They wanted to exercise their special talents, or to coach their chosen sports. A couple of them were the best teachers I ever had.

There was nothing elitist about the school, apart from the games business. We all took the same classes; nothing was reserved for some few blessed with angelic celerity of intellect. Unable to consult vanished records, I feel confident in saying that nine subjects dominated the curriculum. We all had four years of English, including Public Speaking, which my father believed was the most important thing taught in schools. We had Biology, Chemistry and Physics. We had four years of history, four years of mathematics, four years of Latin, four years of Religion. Perhaps Religion was not really a subject, since it was understood that nobody ever flunked Religion; and in any case, the grade was not averaged with the other grades. The period for Religion was half the length of the other periods, and since it was the first thing in the morning, it provided welcome buffering for those who might be late on those days when the Interstate Bridge was raised to accommodate traffic on the mighty Columbia.

I always got my best grades in Mathematics, since I would always do the work to get it out of the way; but my favorite subject was English, in which I always got the worst grades, although I could never figure out why. Actually, I would be at the back of the book when the rest of the class was at the front, reading all the things we were told we could skip, and staying home to write my themes after the due date. In my senior year, however, they made me the editor of the school paper; and I was named Class Poet, filling the role of salutatorian when we graduated. For the long run, the most illuminating thing in the school was probably Latin. I never

recovered from the astonishment I felt when it really came home to me that there was *another language*, even one that survived mainly in liturgies, books, and monuments. What this must mean about the nature of the human mind, and about the nature of the world!

It was in Latin class that I learned about Caesar; and about the contours of the Empire; about the stockaded *limes*, keeping out the barbarians, like the Great Wall of China, running along the Danube and the Rhine. When our unit fought along that ancient boundary during the Second World War, I thought about Caesar, and about Mr. Chips' story about the Germans, and wondered how many of the soldiers bridging the Rhine were remembering Caesar. And I wondered what that meant for the kind of world we've got here, after all.

The textbooks we had in high school were dull to the eye; we could hardly have expected anything different. Our most modern text, and the most exciting, must have been *Latin for Today*, copiously illustrated with half-tone drawings that pretty much fixed my visualization of the ancient world. I think it may have been one of the very earliest of the "easy reading" texts. What motivated its choice, I cannot guess, since our teachers seemed to believe it concealed the structure of the language so carefully that no one could possibly learn Latin from its degenerate example. Therefore, we had constant supplementation from Bennett's *Latin Grammar*, dictated to us section after section, and copied down into our notebooks. It was a long time before the systematic nature of declensions and conjugations dawned on me. Excitement and illustrations, therefore, might seem to indicate serious material deficit in a textbook.

Certainly the dull books required a different kind of supplement. Narrative history, whether of the United States or Western Europe, stopped short of the First World War, and needed there no supplement at all, since we heard about all that from our uncles. Because it didn't appear in books, I think it did not seem of the first importance, just

part of the lives of some relatives. We used to spend one day a week with the *Literary Digest*, a magazine that suffered precipitous decline for having predicted Mr. Hoover's re-election during my sophomore year. It continued to be used in schools, and it was after my day that a substitute was found for it. More substantial help in history came from the textbooks of an uncle who had been to school with the Benedictines at St. Martin's Abbey, or from my father's, who had been to St. James's School in Bay City, Michigan. Old books were more tightly written than the new, and managed to include fascinating detail on the Merovingians, who continue to provide my paradigm for Third World politics. My Uncle's Cicero and Ovid released some of my allowance in my junior year for non-academic purchases, since I did not have to buy any books for Latin at all. Mirabile dictu, I discovered they contained racy verses in a Spencerian hand about Cleopatra's corset, et eiusdem generis alia plurima. The same year, I got my copy of Long's *American Literature* from Gene Duber, when he was disposing of his effects as he headed for the Naval Academy at Annapolis. That book had many pencilled drawings, elaborately shaded, that established in my mind the veritable difference between boys entering upon their junior year, and men who had already completed it.

While elsewhere improvement of instruction might focus on methods of teaching, I am sure none of my teachers would have been seduced by such modernity. Not for mathematics or chemistry, to be sure, but for most subjects, three or four simple strategies seemed to work. Class usually consisted in our reading aloud from the textbook by turns. Textbooks were important because they were the major tools for teaching us how to think; they were not solely treasuries of facts. We were subject to constant interrogation on the meaning of what we were reading, and were required to restate the material in our own words. I remember my surprise that one might even be asked questions on the portion of the text one was assigned to read aloud to the class oneself. What I learned thereby was that

reading and understanding were not two tasks, but only one; and that if one did not understand the text one read, one did no better than a parrot.

Instruction in foreign languages was not different from the close reading of English, only for Latin it was called "translation." Respect for the integrity of the text was validated for us when we found that Caesar raw was easier than Caesar adapted by the authors of *Latin for Today*, when they interposed their New York preconceptions between Roman and Oregonian (and Washingtonian, of course).

For homework we outlined the textbook. Outlining was taught over again every year in English classes, to be sure: capital letters and small letters, Roman numerals and Arabic numerals. But I outlined more than one book before I came to the realization that books had form, and that the form controlled the meaning. How often have I rediscovered since, that the learning of adolescents is exaggerated in their own minds by their mere verbalism, whereas they long continue to suffer agonies of bewilderment, having never consciously experienced the structure of any book they have ever read.

Nothing will make mandated composition a pleasure. But outlining many books will help develop the sense of form that comes so painfully, and is absolutely indispensable for educated thought, whether or not one proceeds further along to any extensive writing.

We took exams, of course. The questions could be answered only by well-organized little essays. I cannot recall that cheating was a problem when I was in high school, since so much weight fell upon the writing, and proportionately less therefore upon mere data. If there were ever objective tests, I don't remember them.

Had I gone to our local public school in those days, the teachers would have come from our own region, and from the region's normal school, well preserved in their provincialisms. Irv Jolliver, an artist who did attend that school, has often said that Grant Wood's *American Gothic* conveys a perfectly adequate impression of his instructors at that

time, occasional pince nez or frock coat notwithstanding. Certainly there were excellent teachers there, who opened doors upon the world. But as it happened, the teachers I had came from out of the area; from Chicago, even from Boston. They talked to us about London, Paris, Washington and Rome. Wherever they came from, our teachers had communicable enthusiasms, not only common values, nor just uniform expectations.

What I think I learned from my teachers was chiefly a kind of liberty, a kind of confidence that being human was in itself superior to mere learning, a freedom from that special kind of pettiness that Shakespeare mocks in schoolmasters. In a later day, I am sure that some would have judged them over-qualified at their level of instruction with transcripts of record filled up with courses not ordinarily taught in the high schools of Oregon, and therefore never counted toward certification. But then, they were not interested in education as a mere process, but rather in the great world of noble men and women, of movements, of ideas.

They directed us toward those works of "high vulgarization," as it was called in those days, that made the work of the specialist understandable to laymen: the books of Eddington and Jeans; the books of Harold Lamb on the Crusades, and on the great conquerors; Horace Gregory's translation of Catullus, (with decorations by Zhenya Gay). And if "Religion" was as jejune as I have indicated, in some other class I picked up a genuine love for New Testament history, and for the books of Ramsey and Lightfoot. While I am sure one's basic moral orientation always comes from one's family, I do believe I learned from my teachers in high school the equal importance of accepting one's sexuality and of training in chastity, although there was no such thing as sex education.

It was from those teachers that one could learn about the differences between the Oxford colleges, and the difference between Oxford and Cambridge. Or about a restaurant in Rome whose walls were lined with bottles instead of books, that was nevertheless called La Bibliotheca. Or what Pope Leo XIII said, when he saw the painting of the naked

lady inside the lid of the snuff box tendered him by the Marquis. Or the hazards of swimming the Hellespont. Or what Father Delaunay said to the French police when the Fathers were ejected from their Paris house by the anti-clerical government.

My favorite teacher, Mr. Edwin Derrah, went into the printing business during my junior year. That was in the depths of the depression. But in my senior year, in answer to prayer, a new English teacher turned up, from the Netherlands, Father John Hooyboer, whose friendship has continued through all these years.

Twenty years after my own graduation from high school, after college, after the years in the army, after riding the G.I. Bill to the end of the line, it came about finally that I would myself enter the family's favorite profession. By one of those convergences of multiple causal chains that startle unbelievers, I was invited to teach at Providence Academy, a private school which my mother and her mother had attended, and to teach what I had years ago been taught: Latin, English and History. I had never thought of teaching high school, and in all my travels I had never taken any of the requisite education courses; but in the emergency I was eligible for temporary certification, and soon made up my deficiencies.

Going back to high school, so to speak, I felt a kinship with John of Salisbury; for returning to Oxford after a life in diplomacy, he found they were talking there about the same things they had talked about in the days of his youth. Thus, the curriculum at the Academy was no different than it had been in my own high school; except that history now included the First World War, not yet of course the Second. But the textbooks were really into the Great Depression. I think the curriculum had not changed from my father's time and my uncle's time; not perhaps from my great-grandfather's time. I believe that in 1860, Modern History stopped short of the Crimean War. One would have been hearing about it from the uncles.

Not everything could be the same. The greatest surprise was not in the Academy's offerings in Art and Music, which

would have been foreign to my school. It was in the teaching materials that were placed in my hands, the textbooks and the audiovisual aids. I could not believe it. The textbooks I now encountered were miniature museums. The English books included portfolios of paintings of the great masters. The texts for American History were augmented by materials of social history that twenty years before would have made intelligible the aridities of American politics. The Piltdown Man no longer functioned in World History, but the sweep and coherence of Europe's many centuries was there, even though the Merovingians were still getting short shrift. The Latin texts were still "easy reading," but the Neo-Latin passages of *Latin for Americans* had been composed mainly by Paul Pascal of the University of Washington, and the linguistic structures were made plain. The half-tones of *Latin for Today* were bettered by four color press.

I do not remember that we had audiovisual aids when I was in high school. I do not know what value audiovisual aids may really have. Paul Pascal claimed the teacher should be the only audiovisual aid, as the only teaching instrument should be the book. I do know, they were a source of wonder and delight to me, when I discovered them, and I thoroughly enjoyed entertaining the students with film strips and slides in the darkened classroom. When I first started teaching, neither I nor the students were saturated by exposure to television, and a teacher's transparencies of the Grand Tour might instruct and motivate at once. Educational films, prepared with instruction in mind, seemed to me too hideously condescending for use, whereas commercial films concentrated on subjects, not on process, and were enjoyable in themselves. When I was in high school, the only movies we saw were in the theatres downtown.

My colleagues, when I began teaching at the Academy, were like the teachers who had taught me. They were more interested in the world out there, in the play, or in the poem, and in the reactions of their students, than they were in educational process. They had the same views of admin-

istration that I remembered from Columbia Prep. When I was a student, I did not know anything about administration; and at that time I am sure I must have seen administrators as essentially disciplinarians. At the Prep, and also at the Academy, since the faculty ran the school, and helped in raising funds to supplement a modest endowment, administration was regarded as a burden, subordinate to work with the students. Consequently, administrative positions were rotated, so that no one would be overwhelmed or fall into depression.

Another attitude toward administration prevailed in the public school where necessity placed me before long, where teachers did not raise the funds and did not run the school. Just about then, I began to realize that a guarantee of money by the state brings a host of problems in its train. For the administrators are separated from the teachers, by that very guarantee, and become the employers of the teachers. To me, the greatest difference between private schools and public schools is the fact of that separation. In my personal situation, of course, I was getting more money; but somehow I had lost ultimate control of my working conditions, and I felt that I had lost my voice.

John Saindon, a friend long in public education in California, gave me some advice in the course of my transition from the private school: "They will tell you that if you have any problems, you should ask for help. But I say unto you: Don't have problems. And if you do, don't ask for help."

Absolutely the only problems in schools are problems of student behavior. In my own youth, and in my own school, indocility had no defense. Male or female, the teacher had unquestionable moral authority in the classroom, and the physical presence to enforce it. The anecdotes that made Miss Dove a recognizable character were familiar and not fiction. At the Prep, they had recruited guys that liked to hit, and they wanted winners, so they were prepared to live with the consequences. If your conversation ever distracted your teacher, he'd throw the eraser at you. Prudence mightily discouraged rashness, when you might be cuffed by the impatient bear. But by the time I myself came to teach,

discipline in public schools had already become a quagmire, a problem in public relations, a contest between the races, the sexes, the agencies, undoubtedly compounded by the tendency of many parents to let the school take over larger areas of responsibility for the young of the community.

Perhaps in reality there is at least one other problem; a kind of reflex of the problem of student behavior, and related to burn out. All the teachers in public schools do not work equally hard, since some teachers have no work to take home. Long ago, the National Council of Teachers of English recommended that English classes not exceed twenty-five students, that the English teacher's load be no greater than one hundred and twenty-five students. But in my experience, only specially funded federal programs ever were kept to those numbers. And in my experience, only one administrator really believed that this was an area where teachers needed help. He was always able to find money hidden somewhere in the complexities of his budget for aides to correct student writing. But unless he were Paul Gutierrez, you might go many years before getting help with your overload, had you asked for help.

The curriculum at Hudson's Bay High School was essentially the same as at the Academy. There was certainly a more generous number of electives, as there is the possibility of providing a comprehensive high school when the school reaches a certain population. Small public schools tend to become unlikely because they have money first, then administrators, then teachers, then students, and then they can build their curriculum. But in the fifties and sixties students were getting an excellent education in the traditional round. I was using the same textbooks I did across the way, *Latin for Americans*, *Adventures in Appreciation*, *Adventures in American Literature*. It is true there was a kind of under-curriculum: not everybody had to take World History, not everybody had to take English the senior year; but the superiority of our graduates was recognized by the colleges, and we produced a respectable number of Merit finalists.

I have never known more dedicated teachers than those at Hudson's Bay. There was an interesting difference noticeable between those who had gone to the teachers' colleges, and those who had been to Lewis and Clark, or Reed, or Vanderbilt, or Yale. Teachers from the colleges turned out a slicker package; they used simulations, and were prone to rely on objective tests. They tended not to read the great books, but to give weight to educational research; and they had a pronounced appetite for administration. Something like this was the case throughout our district. Our teachers were able to co-operate with each other on a common project, to do their own homework, and to make each other look good. When William J. Bennett got to know us, before he ended up heading the National Humanities Foundation, he began referring to Vancouver as "the Athens of the West."

I have emphasized the great stabilities in my experience with schools; but there have been instabilities. Sometimes we seemed to ride a roller-coaster. Just at the time when I began to teach, two books critical of the American educational establishment were beginning to circulate. One of these was a general indictment of American public education entitled *Educational Wastelands*. The other dealt with a narrower issue, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. But a worse blow to the declining prestige of educational theorists came in October, 1957, when the Russians put their first satellite into orbit. Americans found it hard to express their outrage: that we were not the first with every novelty was insupportable. So deeply were the public schools believed to be the bulwark of the nation's liberty and superiority, that our betterment by foreigners who threatened our liberty was perceived as a failure of our schools.

Always uneasy about Russian success, whether in chess, science or the knowledge of foreign languages, we now decided we must emulate them. Moreover, there was here a great opportunity for the involvement of the Federal government in the nation's schools. The result was a National Defense Education Act, hurried through Congress before we would fall even further behind. A National Science Foundation was created and fabulously endowed, followed

in due course by a National Humanities Foundation. And so now there was money provided by the Federal government in the sure and certain hope of correcting a whole range of the country's ills.

Judging by events, it would doubtless seem that old ways of doing things were now discredited, that new approaches were clearly in order. But there was no refined evaluation of current practice to determine precisely which of the old ways were discredited. Nor was there any surety that new approaches were functionally appropriate. Without undue caution, we found ourselves in the era of the New Social Studies, the New Mathematics, the New English, the New Ways of Learning a Foreign Language. Not that there was a common newness among all these approaches; no coherent viewpoint came to expression. And yet all the varied approaches did have a great common failing: they regarded only the extremes of the psychological span: doubtfully meeting the needs of the very bright or even the very dull, they confused the majority of ordinary students. They confused also their parents, and sometimes frightened their teachers.

The fateful history of the New Math is a scandal known to everyone. But our school district can provide some other stories, exemplifications only of what has happened across the land.

For many years, attacks had been constant on the teaching of traditional grammar in the schools, and in the post-Sputnik age there seemed to be a grand chance to replace it wholly with a new grammar as conceived (we were told) by modern linguistics. The machinery by which textbook adoptions were made ground through its many phases, and our district adopted Robert's English series. We got the books. But while some teachers were conversant with linguistic science, most weren't, even though conventionally well prepared. What would one expect might happen to instruction in grammar? What do you suppose happened to Robert's books?

Teachers of foreign languages, even Latin teachers, who took advantage of the special programs available in those days, were able to attend good schools abroad, to get higher

degrees, or just to travel in Germany or Spain, or go to Rome, so that the preparation of our teachers was quite significantly enhanced. Our school district has always had many people willing to invest themselves. Presently, however, they found themselves facing a unique problem.

One of the marvels of those post-Sputnik years was the sudden proliferation of educational hardware. At that time there was talk of "teaching machines," which some administrators hoped might replace teachers, who had proved so ineffectual, or might at least make instruction teacher-proof. If foreign languages were to thrive in American schools, the greatest teaching machine of all was bound to be the Language Lab.

There were school districts known to us where the administrators to a man believed that "Foreign Language" was a language, as though there were two languages, "English" and "Foreign." Attempts to probe this special ignorance generated hilarious stories that we told each other at Gearhart, where teachers of foreign languages met annually in convention. That the speech of all foreigners is unintelligible does not mean they are all speaking the same language. That some of them do not even understand each other does not mean that some are more stupid than others. (*Ur-dumheit* can almost always be ruled out as an explanation for any human phenomenon.) There is not really a special language called "Foreign," but a foreign language must be EITHER German OR Latin OR Russian OR Spanish, and hiring a Foreign Language Teacher reasonably requires a decision about the language the school wishes to offer, since qualifications for foreign language teaching vary for each of the languages . . . *und so weiter.*

The administrators of our district were naturally more sophisticated. But when the federal government was willing to buy language labs, the availability of all the money fascinated school board members, and some of them regarded the opportunity heaven sent to buy all that wonderful stuff during their term of service. At the time, one of our local magnates dominated the board (he had started out his career as a body guard), and since he was used to making

purchases of significant hardware, and capable of handling great sums of money without nerves, it was he who selected the machinery he thought appropriate for all three of our high schools.

Most of the time, school boards take direction from the professionals, and sometimes we may suspect that they are manipulated by professionals. But in this instance the administration suffered the intrusion of a board member in a professional realm, and did not insist that teachers be at least consulted. Supporting power is not always the worst way to go, and there are certainly cases where the administrators would be at least as well qualified as the teachers within a given area; but at the time the purchase of the language lab was contemplated, there could be no doubt that it was the teachers who had special competence.

The greater error was to select one kind of Language Lab out of many, all that expensive modern hardware, without considering its peculiar vulnerabilities to the day's successive classes of adolescents, and without consulting the opinions of teachers about its peculiar mechanical limitations which notably lessened its usefulness as an instrument of instruction. When the software that had been purchased with the Lab finally arrived, some teachers found the books and programs so repugnant that they never used them, preserving carefully the pitiful textbooks of a former day, even for many years. They long outlasted the Language Lab.

Expectations that machines would revolutionize the teaching of foreign languages in American high schools were doomed to frustration. When the regional head of the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages came to inspect our school's new equipment, he asked us the fateful question: "What are they going to do when they find out you can't teach the language by spinning tapes?"

The answer came before ten years were out. The Language Lab was disassembled, because the room it occupied was needed for remedial reading instruction, and the language lab "stations" became "study carrels" in the library, which had become "the media center." In the meantime,

enrollments in foreign languages collapsed, as other programs expanded and other empires grew, depending upon adventitious funding from outside the district: Drivers' Education, Family Life Education, Vocational Education, and above all, Reading.

While we were working through the New Math, the New Social Studies, and the Language Lab, and before our prophets could tell what the end would be, my days in the classroom had a happy tonality. The students were open, laughed at their teachers' jokes, accepted correction, took prizes, won games. There seemed to be a wonderful kind of growth within the country; new schools were being built, old patterns of segregation were giving way before the generous spirit of Liberty. And even young Republicans took orientation from John F. Kennedy.

When Mr. Kennedy came to Portland during his campaign, and walked into Howard Hall, and up onto the stage where I had received my high school diploma in 1935, he looked as though he himself might have been a student there those twenty-seven years before. When I saw him next, the President of the United States addressing the Romans on the Campidoglio, he appeared like the very incarnation of his generation. Even mocking the Kennedys was a mode of participation in their style of life; even the malice that made delightful after all the attempt of Mrs. Kennedy's sister to enact *Laura* on television. High school students never before or since have had such a President to relate to. Nor had their teachers: he knew and used all those figures of speech. He also knew their names. He was a bond joining teachers and students to each other. His assassination changed all those identifications, juvenile or ironic.

With the passing of time, it seems to me more and more that the assassination broke the wholeness of this country. Many years later, in a play called *Vanities*, there was an episode in which the announcement of the assassination in a high school gymnasium is used for purely cynical effect. When the play came to be written, an effect of that sort could be considered dramatically plausible. It would not have been thought of in 1963.

The decade after the assassination was perhaps the most difficult of all my years of teaching. It was a decade of insousiance and rebellion. All the wonderful characteristics of the young that make them naturally teachable were in occultation. The war in Vietnam occupied more and more the thoughts of the students as the possibilities of service in the war became nearer to actuality for them. We soon had our own graduates in the services, whose deaths so far away seemed incredible. In the colleges, of course, protests continued to mount through the years. But then there were race riots in the Middle West, in the East, in California, and more assassinations. The fear and the rebellion were a kind of fever, spreading across the country, and up the coast. We heard about principals in California high schools whose careers were abruptly terminated when they proved incapable of controlling students, and we dreaded what might be in store for ourselves.

Students in our schools were reading *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and a lot of them were already living out the Apocalypse. They read *Future Shock*, and persuaded themselves that the coming years would be so totally different from anything in the present that school was a kind of absurdity. The news magazines were proclaiming a permanent sexual revolution and the death of God. *The Secular City* described the withering away of Christianity, its inevitable transformation into other forms. Twenty years later, however, it seems that the announcement of God's death was somewhat premature. The City was possibly secular only to the myopic eye of an evanescent ideology. And the sexual revolution has been officially called off in the interests of sanity and health. We learn all this from the very authorities who got students and teachers upset in the first place.

During the academic year that began in 1969 as the anti-war movement peaked, and ended in 1970, when schools began closing early, after the melodrama at Kent State, we saw major efforts by our administration to cope with student unrest, which many believed now constituted a norm of participatory democracy. It was that year we welcomed a

new principal, brought in from outside the district, and he had a new idea. If the students wanted to do their own thing, we should deliberately arrange for it to happen. Therefore, faculty were asked to dream up courses, however wild, which they might personally like to teach. A great number of course offerings were proposed, and we wondered what machinery would be brought into play in order to prune the list for the students. No one anticipated that our new principal would personally and without any consultation prepare the pre-registration forms that offered students the whole number of our wild dreams. The machinery brought into play for pruning the list was student choice. Our course of studies that would have been recognizable to my great-grandfather, that was precisely what school meant to my father and mother, to my uncles and to me, was quite swept away. It was a time when all subjects came to approximate the "Religion" of my own school days: no one was supposed to flunk anything.

Within the limits of state law and student prejudice, we had a wholly voluntary curriculum. Students themselves were not so egalitarian that they would permit abolition of all distinction between sophomores, juniors, and seniors; the state would not permit voiding its minimum requirements. But the "Biology" we had known was dissolved by student choice into "Ecology," and "Home Farming" (doing the lawn), and "Marine Biology" (promising a trip to Cannon Beach at neap tide). The Social Studies Department had takers for "Environmental Studies," and for "History of the Non-Western World." Students enrolled for "Sports in Literature," and "Men and Machines," sponsored by the Language Arts Department. "Witchcraft" and "Modern Poetry" had appeared on the pre-registration forms, but did not find their minimum audience. To my great surprise, some of my own proposals were picked up by sufficient students, so that I found myself with three sections of "Anthropology," "The Bible as Literature," and "Classical Literature and Mythology." Horace Gregory's translation of the *Metamorphoses* came into paperback at just the right time (with illustrations by Zhenya Gay).

It took the school ten years to recover from this debacle, to root up these amaranthine weeds that suffered no flowers save their own to mount. And to get back to basics. Just in time for the computer revolution and Hi Tech.

In the deteriorating climate of the late sixties, something more than teacher preparation seemed to be needed for the improvement of the schools. Someone had noticed that administrators could have a constructive part to play in instruction, if only they understood what teachers were trying to do, and so were initiated a series of national workshops that joined administrators and teachers into teams, in the hope that they could learn to work together for betterment of the curriculum. Inspired by John Marshall, an administrator of unusual openness, our school district sent teams to two such workshops, and it happened that I was a member of both teams in turn.

Sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the Center for Education in the Social Sciences, a Resource Personnel Workshop brought together in Boulder, Colorado, for several weeks during the summer, ten teams from across the United States, representing different geographic areas and different types of schools. Unfortunately, it was organized by those educational theorists who believe there is absolutely nothing that everybody has to know. Moreover, it was in the days when sensitivity training was having its vogue. Our team was not particularly happy or well regarded because we were resistant to our mentor, and were judged much too task oriented. Emphasis fell so heavily upon process that we were immobilized. Ostensibly we were brought together to observe the demonstration of new social studies materials, chiefly in anthropology and economics, and to learn new viewpoints in social studies. We got the feeling before long that touting the new materials our district was to adopt, and we were to take home and use, far outweighed any other purpose the workshop might have. It was apparent that secondary teachers were regarded as functionaries, even as empty drums, dependent upon college professors for their subject matter, and upon educationists for their methods. The materials we had been

brought to Colorado to observe were indeed teacher-proof; anybody able to read the directions could make them work, without having the bother of understanding them. That teachers might be human beings having access to the same reality as professors and functioning in the same world was an idea that had not yet toppled feudalism among educationists, even though eighteen year olds had already gotten the vote.

In the years when the country sometimes seemed in its death throes, the years of Watergate and Charles Manson, the Oil Embargo and Patty Hearst, there was nevertheless something going on that was the high point of all my teaching career. The second time I was a member of a school district team was totally unlike the first. Developed by the National Humanities Faculty, the Question of Authority Project in which our school district participated was intentionally a three year program. Not only were the teams brought together at different places across the country for three successive summers, but there were lectures by Humanities Faculty members in the school districts, seminars organized by local participants, and involvement of the local community in discussions of the project's theme. It was that theme of *authority* which made the project quite different from anything that had preceded it in American education. All the humane disciplines were represented by the Faculty: artists, political scientists, anthropologists, lawyers, philosophers; and the function of *authority* was examined in each of the humanities in turn. The plain truth that the country had been undergoing a crisis of *authority* had escaped the people in the schools, who had repeatedly accommodated to the threat of force, and who consistently presided over the dissolution of subject matters. It is hardly surprising that the young could anticipate total change, or that the old saw mind at the end of its tether.

I do not know whether or not the Project was thought to have attained the maximum impact originally hoped for. It made a considerable difference in the professional lives of our own team members, securing sanity and restoring faith. It stiffened some spines when the time was ripe for a few

important decisions regarding curriculum. However, the team itself was never used as such by the district. The money had been poured out, and when the money stopped, everything was as it had been before.

The assassination of President Kennedy revealed a great many irrationalities in this country: the imperfect justice, the greed, the cowardice, the folly. Through the twenty years after, we have been coming to face the truth about ourselves as a nation that we could by no means have faced back then. I think we may be coming to face the truth about education. Not only must we come to recognize the cyclical nature of our distress, but we must identify its sources, and attempt to do something about them.

It is somehow in the public funding of education that the problems of education are most manifest, especially perhaps in the Federal funding that we once thought would end all problems. Programs recognized as dubious, or even as splendid, have been justified together on the grounds that "the money is available." The more remote from the school itself the source of funding, the more bizarre the effects on the curriculum. The larger the disposable monies, the more likely it is that unilateral administrative decisions will liquidate existing programs to accommodate novelty, and the more likely that novelty will be unilaterally abandoned when the money runs out. If there is no constancy in our schools, how can there be any way to secure integrity in education?

Well, the great discovery that has illuminated my reflections on the time I have spent in schools, on both sides of the desk, has come to me as a complete surprise. The lesson I have taken, contrary to natural inclination, regards the significance of sports in secondary education, sports considered as a subject matter to be inculcated. While others have seen their subject matters transformed or eliminated, have endured a series of crises in reading, in writing, in mathematics, in social studies, in foreign language, the world of the games has persisted, a city seated on a hill. I can only conclude that our coaches have been our best teachers. The results of their labors are submitted to a

candid world, and we know who has been taught to play, and who hasn't. So, it seems to me, the results of any pretended education ought rightly to be brought to judgment. As a matter of fact, this has been happening, and the results are a cause of almost universal complaint.

If success in athletics furnishes a model, then I think we ought to take the coaches as the models for other teachers. They alone have been able to hold students to a maximum performance, and they alone have held themselves to an ideal of accountability. They alone of American teachers have not submitted to direction from administrators who know less than they about their proper subject matter.

The greatest obstacle to good schooling is surely the separation of administration from teaching. When we see that coaches have been eminently successful in their proper function, we should not be surprised to realize that coaches alone have been able to preserve both administrative and financial responsibility within the area of their expertise.

I am inclined to press on from the lesson I have learned. The current tendency to prefer for school administrators a different training from that judged appropriate for teachers, even to spare administrators from the classroom from the beginning, can only accelerate the decline of education. Administration of schools must be closer to the exchange between teacher and student, not ever more remote, or attempted by any not party to that exchange. And so I would think teachers ought to aim at taking control of the school, to claim responsibility in all those areas now denied them. To be sure, any effort along that line would subject teachers to the discipline of the real world; it would be possible only for teachers who themselves had a coherent education, as well as a great deal of courage. For it certainly would imply Disestablishment.

There is only one reason why private schools weaken and decline, and we know for certain what it is: failure of administration. There is never any national outcry for the reform of private education; students go over to the competition. So do teachers. Columbia Preparatory School contin-

ued to operate through very bad economic times, because it was a good school; it failed in good times, not because it failed to realize the ends for which it had come into being, but for want of will in administrators who were not teachers. After its hundred and ten years, Providence Academy one day closed its doors, even though the school was fulfilling its purpose, because administrators who were not teachers no longer had any clear sense of their own mission. If such schools had secured a guarantee from the state for unconditional financial support, inertia would have carried their administrators indefinitely, with what effect on their teachers we could predict. We have that model in public education. The way to keep schools on task is to take away the guarantee and to restore the conditions of the free market in education.

Across the years, and across cultures, people the age of our high school students are ready for the acquisition of the rhetorical arts: speaking, reading, writing. Across the years, and across cultures, the tests for competence in those arts remain the same. Schools whose students show they have been taught those arts are the schools to whom the future will belong; but schools like students must ever be kept on task.